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ANNUAL HISTORICAL SUPPLEMENT
CALENDAR YEAR 1967

1ST BATTALION 35TH INFANTRY (THE CACTI)
3D BRIGADE, 4TH INFANTRY DIVISION
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96355

Submitted by:
Headquarters, 1/35th Inf
3d Bde, 4th Inf Div
APO San Francisco 96355

WILLIAM W. TAYLOR JR.
LTC, Infantry
Commanding

2-05

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FOREWORD

The 1967 historical supplement of the Cacti Green is presented with the hope that it may be of some service to those charged with the responsibility for development of tactical doctrine and troop training programs, and also with a view toward helping to perpetuate the battalion's proud record among past, present and future members.

An effort was made in the Training and Operations portion of the supplement to present the material in the most readable and understandable manner while highlighting certain actions which demonstrate the successful application of tactics or problems peculiar to fighting in Vietnam. Thus, the action at Hoa Tan describes the successful employment of the "hammer and anvil" tactic, Dien Truong points out the hazards faced by the overzealous company commander who attempts the envelopment of a fortified village with his unit, while the episode of "Charging Charlies" reaffirms the effectiveness - under the proper conditions - of the traditional infantry assault, and so on.

The fighting in Vietnam continues to bear out the validity of the nine principles of war, albeit the techniques of their application have in some cases altered radically. Particularly inviolate is the cardinal rule of strategy, "Be stronger at the decisive point"! The enemy understands this perfectly and devotes constant effort and no small amount of skill to achieve this end, much to the occasional chagrin of the small unit leader.

History is basically the story of people and their actions. So here follows the story of the men of the Cacti Green - their moments of glory, and some of tribulation-in 1967.

WILLIAM W. TAYLOR JR.
LTC, Infantry
Commanding

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ABBREVIATIONS

APC - Armored Personnel Carrier
ARVN - Army of the Republic of Vietnam
FAC - Forward Air Controller
G.O. - General Orders
LAW - Light Antitank Weapon
LRRP - Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol
LZ - Landing Zone
MEDCAP - Medical Civic Action Program
NVA - North Vietnamese Army (also known as PAVN,
People's Army of Vietnam)
TOE - Table of Organization and Equipment
USARPAC - United States Army Pacific

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CHAPTER 1
ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

SECTION I
MISSION

To close with the enemy by means of fire and maneuver in order to destroy or capture him or to repel his assault by fire, close combat and counterattack.

SECTION II
ORGANIZATION

Headquarters and Headquarters Company	TOE 7-16E *
Rifle Companies	TOE 7-18E *
Combat Support Company	TOE 7-178T *

Significant changes in battalion organization: On 10 September 1967, one additional rifle company (D) and a combat support company (E) were activated under the provisions of USARPAC G.O. 149.

SECTION III
PERSONNEL

Average strength of the battalion fluctuated between 700 and 750 men during the first three quarters of 1967. The battalion average strength for the final quarter was 854 due to the activation of an additional rifle company and the formation of the combat support company: Company strength throughout the year for all rifle companies averaged 150 men.

The most significant personnel realignment of the year came with the activation of a fourth rifle company (along with the combat support company) on 10 September. This afforded the battalion commander more flexibility in the planning and conduct of operations.

ROSTER OF COMMANDERS AND PRINCIPAL STAFF OFFICERS

BN CMDR

BN XO

LTC ROBERT C. KINGSTON, Jan-Feb

MAJ ROBERT M. DRUDICK, Jan-Jul

* Modified by USARPAC G.O. 18, dtd 13 Jan 68.

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MAJ JAMES E. MOORE JR., Feb-3Aug
LTC ROBERT G. KIMMEL, 4Aug-14Nov
LTC WILLIAM W. TAYLOR JR., 15Nov-31Dec

MAJ HENRY DOCTOR JR., Aug-Dec

S-1

1LT WILLIAM M. DALEHITE JR., Jan-Jul
CPT DONALD R. PARRISH JR., Aug-Nov
1LT ROGER G. LADD, Nov-Dec

S-2

CPT JAMES A. BURR, Jan-Sep
1LT GLENN R. POWMAN, Aug-Nov
1LT ANTON BLOEMHARD, Dec

S-3

MAJ GAROLD L. TIPPIN, Jan-Sep
MAJ GERALD M. WYNN, Oct-Nov
MAJ JOHN A. JOYCE, Dec

S-4

CPT WILLIAM A. BAKER, Jan-Jul
CPT JAMES H. BRAGG, Aug-Oct
CPT WOLFGANG BOETTCHER, Nov-Dec

HHC

CPT MARTIN P. KELLY, Jan-Aug
1LT DAVID W. CLARK, Aug-Dec

Co A

CPT LINWOOD P. KNIGHT JR., Jan-Feb
CPT LLOYD YOSHINA, Feb-Aug
CPT GEOFFREY D. ELLERSON, Aug-Oct
CPT CHARLES W. CHAPLINSKI, Oct-Dec

Co B

CPT EDGAR L. NEALON, Jan-Mar
CPT KENNETH I. BARTON, Mar-Jul
CPT WILLIAM A. BAKER, Aug-Nov
CPT DONALD C. REH, Nov-Dec

Co C

CPT JOSEPH CAUDILLO, Jan-May
CPT JOHN H. CAVENDER, May-Aug
CPT DAVID R. COLLINS, Sep-Dec

Co D *

CPT WOLFGANG BOETTCHER, Sep
CPT GEORGE C. D'AVIGNON, Oct-Dec

Co E *

CPT JOHN K. TERRY, Sep-Dec

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF BATTALION COMMANDERS

Note: Detailed biographical data on former commanders was not available at this headquarters at date of preparation.

* Companies D & E not activated until 10 September.
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1. LTC ROBERT G. KINGSTON JR., source of commission, USMA - '50.
2. MAJ JAMES E. MOORE JR., source of commission, USMA - '54.
3. LTC ROBERT G. KIRKEL, source of commission, USMA - '52
4. LTC WILLIAM W. TAYLOR JR., LTC Taylor was born in Richmond, Va. on 20 Jan 1925. He entered the army in 1943 and served in World War II as an enlisted man with the 95th Inf Div. Received a direct commission as 2LT, Infantry on 9 May 51, and served with the 45th Inf Div in Korea. LTC Taylor has had a broad background of infantry assignments, having served in all command positions through battalion level and as battalion S-3, battalion XO, and brigade XO. Prior to his present tour in Vietnam, LTC Taylor served three years with the Infantry Branch, Officer Personnel Directorate. He is a 1964 graduate of the Army Command and General Staff College.

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CHAPTER 2
MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

SECTION I
COMMAND POLICIES

Throughout the year a policy was scrupulously followed of allowing each company several days of "stand-down" time each month as the tactical situation warranted. This enabled the company commander to concentrate on such areas as supply procedures, property accountability, unit administration, maintenance of equipment, formal training sessions and funds management. These stand-downs also provided the unit with a needed psychological break from the routine of daily combat operations.

SECTION II
TRAINING & OPERATIONS

Separate Section

SECTION III
LOGISTICS

Not Used

SECTION IV
CIVIC ACTION & PUBLIC INFORMATION

The battalion attempted to integrate civil affairs activities into combat operations whenever possible in addition to maintaining a separate civil affairs program.

During the route security operations on Highway 19, sick calls were frequently held at villages along the route and soap distribution was also made. This program probably directly influenced the low number of sniping incidents which occurred along the battalion's assigned sector of Highway 19.

During Operation Thayer II the battalion medical section worked actively in the villages around Phu Cat. In the village of Phu Diem a particularly effective civic action project was completed. During the daily sick calls held at the village by the battalion MEDCAP team it was noted that the village

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had no readily accessible water supply. To obtain water for their daily needs the villagers had to travel one mile to the nearest source. A team from the battalion began working with the villagers on a well digging project. The job took two months and required some fifty feet of digging before water was reached, but the project had a significant impact on the villagers.

While the battalion was in the Duc Pho area the battalion surgeon and medical section worked closely with Vietnamese health workers in the local hospital. The surgeon made daily rounds of the fifty to seventy in-patients at the hospital. Battalion personnel also instituted a program of English classes in the Duc Pho high school which were extremely well received.

When the battalion moved to its forward fire base at LZ Baldy in November for Operation Wallowa, the civic action program in that area was considerably reduced due to the unsettled tactical situation. However, various civic action activities were continued in the trains area at Duc Pho. On the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays some 30 children from the Rod Orphanage in Duc Pho were guests of the battalion at a special meal in the field trains mess.

All during 1967 the battalion treated over 6,000 civilians during MEDCAPs, assisted in the movement of more than 1,600 refugees to secure areas and turned over some 150 tons of captured rice to GVN officials to be used for refugee relief.

SECTION II

Training & Operations

New Year's Day found the Cacti Green at the Base Camp of the 4th Infantry Division at Pleiku. The battalion was in the final stages of a route clearance and road security mission along twenty miles of Highway 19 running east from Pleiku. This area included the ominous Mang Yang Pass, site of the destruction of French Group Mobile 100 some thirteen years earlier during the Indochina War. However, aggressive patrolling by the battalion north and south of the highway kept the area well cleared of the enemy and limited action to scattered incidents of sniper fire in the Mang Yang Pass.

On 3 January the battalion was airlifted to an area of operations eleven kilometers southwest of Phu My in central Binh Dinh Province to join Operation Thayer II. The battalion launched numerous search and destroy operations and made frequent use of ambushes and blocking positions. Two Viet Cong battalions, one a main force unit, were known to be operating throughout the area. Engagements during this period were characterized by small unit contacts involving a squad or less of the enemy. Scattered throughout the area were numerous cave and tunnel complexes utilized extensively by the enemy. Frequently, liberal applications of irritant CS gas and white phosphorous grenades were required to induce the enemy to quit these lairs.

On 11 February the battalion moved to LZ Uplift, ten kilometers north of Phu My, to participate in Operation Pershing. During the following eleven weeks units of the battalion conducted operations in the rugged hill mass known as Nui Mieu, lying east of LZ Uplift about midway between Highway 1 and the seacoast. During this period emphasis was placed on joint US-ARVN operations. Some fifteen coordinated search and destroy operations were conducted with the 40th and 41st ARVN Regiments by the Cacti Green. In March the battalion

conducted long range reconnaissance patrol (LRRP) training for selected men from each company. The "LRRP School," with emphasis on advanced techniques of patrolling, reconnaissance and small unit tactics sought to provide each company with a nucleus of experts in reconnaissance and patrolling techniques.

HOA TAN

The morning of March 6 began as another day of routine operations for units of the battalion. Alfa and Bravo companies were conducting a village search at Chua Trieu Son located about ten kilometers north-northeast of LZ Uplift. Charlie Company started the day under the operational control of the Commanding Officer of the 1st Bn, 14th Infantry conducting search and destroy operations in the area south of LZ Uplift. But events were already taking place in Hoa Tan, a small village located about four kilometers to the northeast of Chua Trieu Son, which set the stage for one of the 1/35th's more resounding victories of the year. A "Blue Team" (infantry platoon reaction force) from the 1st Squadron, 9th Cavalry was lifted into position on a small rise about 200 meters southeast of Hoa Tan at about 0735 hours after a gunship from Charlie Troop 1/9th Cav had been downed fifty minutes earlier by heavy automatic weapons fire emanating from Hoa Tan. The Blue Team immediately became heavily engaged with an enemy force occupying bunkers on the eastern outskirts of the village. At 1030 hours, one platoon of Alfa Company 2/5th Cavalry was lifted to a blocking position on a hill some 600 meters north of Hoa Tan. Immediately on landing the platoon came under automatic weapons fire from the village and suffered one casualty. Major James E. Moore Jr., Commander of the Cacti Green, was directed to divert Alfa and Bravo Companies from their village search operation at 1045 hours and move them to Hoa Tan. The

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remainder of Alfa Company 2/5th Cav was lifted into positions north of Hoa Tan by 1130 hours. Throughout this period sporadic contact had been maintained by the Blue Team and several gunship strikes were called in on the enemy bunker positions.

By 1130 hours, Alfa and Bravo Companies were moving by foot northeast toward Hoa Tan. One platoon from Alfa Company was dispatched to LZ Anchor, about two kilometers northwest of Chua Trieu-Son, to secure the area so that Alfa Battery 2/9th Artillery (105mm Howitzer) could be lifted from Uplift to Anchor.

At 1300 hours Bravo Company, moving up the road, had reached a point some 500 meters south of Hoa Tan. Here CPT Edgar L. Nealon, commanding Bravo Company, split his force. The 1st and 3d platoons maneuvered initially to the southeast, then north to come up on the small rise where the Blue Team still held. There they would block any attempted enemy withdrawal to the east. The remainder of Bravo Company punched north toward Hoa Tan proper. CPT Linwood P. Knight Jr., commanding Alfa Company, moved his force to the northwest, then east through a saddle on the hills about 1500 meters west of Hoa Tan. Alfa Company then occupied blocking positions along the high ground covering possible escape routes to the south and west of Hoa Tan.

At 1330 hours Major Moore assumed operational control of all forces in the area. The Blue Team was extracted and placed in reserve.

As the 1st and 3d platoons of Bravo Company moved down the narrow ridge line toward the village, they came under withering automatic weapons fire from the firmly entrenched enemy. The force withdrew 500 meters and called for further gunship strikes. Meanwhile CPT Nealon attacked Hoa Tan with the remainder of his company on two axes, to the west and east of the north-south

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road running through the village. As they entered the village the fighting increased sharply. Fighting from well-concealed spider holes and heavy bunkers, the enemy put up a tenacious defense. Bravo Company pushed on, fighting for every foot.

At 1545 hours, Charlie Company, having been released from operational control of the 1/14th Infantry, was lifted into a landing zone five kilometers north of Hoa Tan. The Company immediately moved to occupy blocking positions along the Bo Hop ridgeline which commanded the north and northeast escape routes three kilometers north of Hoa Tan. Bravo Company 2/5th Cavalry was lifted into a blocking position two kilometers to the northwest of the village, while the Blue Team was inserted two kilometers north of Hoa Tan, blocking the road from the high ground. Both units were placed under the operational control of the battalion commander.

By 1600 hours Alfa Company's blocking force was in position and the Howitzer Battery was set up on LZ Anchor. Blocking fires were called in north of Alfa Company's position.

At 1630 hours CPT Nealon was wounded and evacuated. The Bravo Company force fighting in Hoa Tan was still heavily engaged at close quarters. Casualties were mounting and their ammunition supply began to dwindle. Bravo Company (-) withdrew and consolidated in positions along the road to the east of Hoa Tan to permit the evacuation of wounded and ammunition resupply. The 1st and 3d platoons of Bravo Company moved about 100 meters south to link up with the remainder of the company. At 1800 hours Major Moore instructed Bravo Company to break contact and withdraw to two major blocking positions to the east and west of the road, about 500 meters south of the village. Throughout the night heavy fire was placed on the village and along probable escape routes

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by the supporting artillery.

At 0800 hours the following morning after a heavy artillery preparation, Bravo Company attacked north on two axes, while Alfa Company moved down to the low ground just west of Hoa Tan to afford better fire support. Bravo Company met only light resistance. The village was quickly seized. The battle for Hoa Tan was over.

The battle had been waged against the 3d, 4th and Weapons Companies of the 9th Bn, 18th Reg - a unit of the 3d NVA (Yellow Star) Division. The lopsided victory cost the enemy eighty-four men killed and twenty crew-served and individual weapons captured. US losses were eight killed and fifteen wounded. The men of Bravo Company were wearing armored vests on the day of the battle. This resulted in the saving of at least five lives.

The timely application of battlefield mobility and employment of supporting fires in this engagement coupled with the hard-hitting punch of the rifle company in the assault produced a notable victory in this classic example of the "hammer and anvil" tactic.

On 20 April, the battalion moved north some forty miles to the Duc Pho area of southern Quang Ngai Province to become one of the units comprising Task Force Oregon. Operations in the Duc Pho area soon came to be characterized by vicious, close-in fighting, frequently in fortified villages. Prior to the entry of Task Force Oregon units into the area, the enemy had never met any serious sustained opposition and he controlled over eighty per cent of the area. It soon became evident that the enemy here was much more willing to stay and fight from his carefully prepared fortifications. Many of these were constructed sturdily enough to withstand a direct hit from a 155mm howitzer. As if anxious to test this "new unit", the enemy initiated a fierce engagement

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from within the fortified village of Thiep Son on 22 April. The Cacti Green was tried and not found wanting as the men of Charlie and Bravo Companies and the Reconnaissance Platoon wrested the village from the enemy on 23 April with the support of artillery and air strikes. Subsequently Bravo Company destroyed twenty-two bunkers in Thiep Son, all having overhead cover from three to five feet thick. The battle cost the enemy forty-seven dead while the battalion lost five men killed.

Training during this period focused on artillery forward observer skills. A three day class was initiated and conducted by the artillery liaison officer. Fire mission requests and adjustment of artillery were stressed. Two men from each company received this training. A system was devised of rotating all rifle platoons through a $3\frac{1}{2}$ day training cycle at LZ Montezuma. Emphasis was placed on rifle marksmanship, battle drill, ambushes, patrolling, mines and bobby traps and map reading.

DIEN TRUONG

The dew still lay on the grass as the men of Alfa Company jumped off at 0600 hours on the morning of 22 May. CPT Lloyd N. Yoshina's men were moving on the village of Dien Truong, located to the east of Highway 1, seventeen kilometers southeast of Duc Pho. As the company approached the village from the west they came under persistent automatic weapons fire from the village. CPT Yoshina decided to have his 1st and 2d platoons maneuver in a wide arc to the northeast to envelop Dien Truong from the north. However this plan came to naught as both platoons came under intense fire and their attack stalled in the open rice paddies north of the village. In an attempt to relieve the pressure on these platoons, the company commander moved with his 3d platoon across Highway 1 and gained the outskirts of the village, there to be stopped

by withering enemy fire from the many bunkers throughout the village. By 0830 hours all elements of Alfa Company were pinned down. They were to remain so for the better part of the next four hours.

With the support of gunship strikes, Alfa Company slowly began to extricate itself from its precarious position. Meanwhile artillery began pounding the village and two air strikes were called in on the hill mass to the northeast of Dien Truong. Major Moore alerted CPT Kenneth I. Barton to prepare his Bravo Company for a combat assault onto the high ground south of the village to further relieve the pressure on embattled Alfa. Bravo Company was lifted in to the area on the southern hill slope without incident at 0950 hours. The company immediately attacked to their northwest; as they entered the southern portion of Dien Truong they also became heavily engaged.

Between 1500 and 1600 hours four air strikes were called in on the northwest sector of the village. By this time Alfa Company had broken contact and withdrawn to the west of the village where they established a blocking position with three platoons on line. The FAC controlling the air strikes reported observing thirty-three enemy bodies within the village.

At 1730 hours Bravo Company 2/35th Infantry came under the operational control of Major Moore. At 1815 hours, he had them lifted into the same area where Bravo Company of the Cacti Green had landed earlier. Bravo 2/35th immediately maneuvered to take up positions on the right flank of Bravo 1/35th.

At 1900 hours, CPT John C. Cavender's Charlie Company was lifted into the area, minus one platoon used for battalion fire base security. Charlie Company occupied blocking positions along the southeast sector of the village, tying in with Bravo 2/35th's right flank.

Darkness found Dien Truong ringed to the west and south by four rifle

companies. Continuous illumination and artillery and gunship strikes covered the open ground to the north of the village, while a platoon of tanks on the eastern shore of An Khe Lake laid down heavy blocking fires on the eastern edge of the village.

The following morning, behind three airstrikes and a smoke screen, Alfa and Bravo Companies joined in the final assault of Dien Truong. They met minor resistance throughout the morning and by 1500 hours the village complex was occupied. The thirty-two hour battle resulted in eighty-seven enemy killed and forty-nine weapons captured. Dien Truong served as a warning to all commanders of the threat posed to a single rifle company in attempting to engage single-handedly an enemy force fighting from a fortified village with every intention of staying. The lesson was not lost.

Throughout June and into July the battalion continued operations aimed at clearing the enemy out of the Duc Pho area and preventing his resupply parties from keeping his forces in the mountainous area west and south of Duc Pho provisioned. Small unit actions and ambushes were used extensively. As the summer wore on the mercury shot up and stayed there. Temperatures in excess of 100 degrees were the norm.

CHARGING CHARLIES CHARGE

On 15 July, CPT Cavender and his Charlie Company were operating in the rugged terrain fifteen kilometers southwest of Duc Pho. The area is characterized by steep hills, the slopes of which are covered with thick jungle undergrowth. In most places a double canopy completely shuts out the sun. Charlie Company had been working the area for two days, acting on an intelligence report that an NVA battalion was operating in the area. The temperature was an energy-sapping 105 degrees.

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Charlie Company was moving south along two axes. The 2d and 3d platoons were on a high ridgeline with the company minus moving parallel in the valley below. At 1035 hours the 2d platoon under 2LT Anthony M. Hassa came upon an enemy bunker from the rear. Surprised and unable to fight effectively since the bunker was oriented to fire down the slope, the three enemy soldiers inside bolted and were killed by the platoon. All had been armed. The two platoons continued their cautious movement down the slope. Suddenly the whole area erupted in a blaze of fire - the enemy had allowed the point squad to come within twenty meters of the well-camouflaged bunkers before engaging them. According to PSG Jack H. Jasper, 2d platoon sergeant, "The fire was so intense that no one could move - if he did he was hit."¹ The platoon suffered nine wounded in the first minutes, but managed to gain fire superiority over the enemy, firing their M-16's, machineguns, and sixteen LAW's (Light Antitank Weapon).

Meanwhile the 3d platoon was maneuvering to the left in an attempt to flank the enemy positions. However they soon became heavily engaged also. 2LT James H. Smith, 3d platoon leader, was hit twice leading an assault on one of the bunkers. In just one of the many acts of valor performed by Cacti Green medics that day, SP4 Lawrence W. Ireland, the 3d platoon medic, braved enemy fire to carry his wounded platoon leader back to a covered position where his wounds could be treated.

By 1200 hours, CPT Cavender was maneuvering his 1st and 4th platoons up the ridge in an attempt to close the pincer on the enemy. Their forward progress was greatly hampered by the dense foliage. Two squads from the 1st platoon were detached and sent to a small knob to the east of the enemy

1. "Charging Charlies Charge," MAJ G.L. Tippin, HQ 1/35 INF, 15Jul67, p2

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position as a blocking force to the north of the enemy. While moving forward to reconnoiter the enemy positions a squad from the 1st platoon came under heavy automatic weapons fire from previously undetected bunkers, resulting in several casualties.

At 1230 hours a squad from the 2d platoon pulled back 100 meters to clear a landing zone for an ammunition resupply and the evacuation of wounded.

The 3d platoon maneuvered into position to employ their LAWs, and knocked out the bunkers to their immediate front. But now the platoon was receiving heavy fire from further to their east. Due to the distance at which the battle had been joined and the dense overhead foliage, the employment of supporting artillery and gunship fires was not feasible.

By 1400 hours the disposition of Charlie Company was: 2d and 3d platoons to the west of the enemy positions, 2 squads of the 1st platoon on the knob to the enemy's east, and the remainder of the 1st platoon with the 4th platoon and company command group to the north. The gap to the south was effectively covered by fire from the two squads on the eastern knob.

Charlie Company now concentrated on neutralizing the remaining bunkers with LAWs and a 90mm recoilless rifle, but the effort was hampered by the dense vegetation. The company continued to take casualties and had suffered seventeen wounded by this time. CPT Cavender decided to take the bunkers with a frontal assault. At 1600 hours, using the 2d and 3d platoons to put down a base of fire, Cavender led his remaining force in the final assault. The infantry line rose as one. They stormed the enemy bunkers in a frenzy, shouting and screaming at the top of their lungs. So violent was the attack that some of the enemy broke and attempted to flee while others were found cowering in

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their positions. Using grenades and heavy fire the men soon took their objective losing only one man during the final rush. The position consisted of five large bunkers arranged in a circle. In and around the bunkers were found twenty-five enemy bodies along with fifteen weapons. After the battle CPT Cavender said, "The longer we stayed where we were, the more casualties we were taking. I have never seen enemy fire so accurate. It seemed like every time a man moved he was hit. We were too close for artillery and air, and we couldn't pull back without taking a lot of casualties. Charlie was surprised when we charged. Once we started our assault, I knew that it would soon be over, and victory was ours.²"

This action by Charlie Company bears testimony to the fact that, even denied the use of his heavy supporting fires, the well-trained, aggressive American infantryman is more than a match for the enemy.

The battalion continued to participate in Operation Baker until 4 October. Action during August and September continued to be on the small scale order, with numerous village sweeps and ambushes being conducted. However, the enemy never ventured another sizeable encounter with the battalion. By the time the Cacti Green departed Duc Pho on 4 October to join Operation Wheeler in Tam Ky (southern Quang Nam Province) the Viet Cong yoke on Duc Pho had been broken.

During Operation Wheeler (4 Oct - 3 Nov) the battalion was under the operational control of the 1st Bde, 101st Abn Div. Operating from LZ Marylou, the companies conducted extensive search and destroy operations, sweeps and ambushes. On 9 - 10 October, Alfa Company encountered several squad size elements three kilometers northwest of LZ Marylou. In the ensuing fight

2. Tippin, op. cit., p.7.

twenty-four enemy were killed, while elements of two platoons of Alfa Company were hard hit in an ambush, losing eight men killed and ten wounded. On 20 October a small measure of vengeance was extracted when the Reconnaissance Platoon killed an NVA officer armed with a CAR-15 which had been taken from a lieutenant killed in the 10 October action.

On 4 November the battalion left the Tam Ky area, jumping north twenty-five miles to LZ Baldy, near Hoi An. For the remainder of the year the Cacti Green participated in Operation Wallowa under operational control of the Commanding Officer, 3d Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile). Major contacts with the enemy during the Operation Wallowa action were with elements of the 2d NVA Division. These contacts were characterized by sharp, relatively short battles in which the enemy permitted US troops to advance to within very short distances of their concealed positions before initiating action. Such tactics frequently gave the enemy the initial advantage of surprise and effectively limited our use of supporting fires. Operations conducted in the new area of operations included night patrols, ambushes and search and destroy operations.

THON HAI

On the morning of 9 November Alfa Company, under CPT Charles W. Chaplinski Jr., was advancing toward the village of Thon Hai about twenty-one kilometers southwest of LZ Baldy, aboard armored personnel carriers of Bravo Troop, 1st Squadron, 1st Armored Cavalry Regiment. Suddenly the column was taken under heavy recoilless rifle, mortar and automatic weapons fire from the village. Two of the APC's were destroyed almost immediately. Dismounting his men, CPT Chaplinski deployed his company and the supporting APC's on a broad front to the northeast of Thon Hai.

At this juncture LTC Robert G. Kimmel, battalion commander, instructed the commander of Bravo Company, CPT Donald C. Reh, to move his unit to an area southeast of the village and set up a blocking position. Bravo Company was located about 350 meters from the outskirts of the village; during this maneuver the company received sniper fire and sustained a few casualties.

At this time Alfa Company with Bravo Troop 1/14 Cav in support attempted to move against the enemy positions, but were held up by intense enemy fire.

During the afternoon, LTC Kimmel instructed Alfa Company and Bravo Troop to pull back while air strikes were brought in on the enemy positions. While these were in progress, Charlie Company, 2/12th Cavalry was lifted into the area and established a blocking position on the high ground to the south of the village.

Alfa Company along with Bravo Troop remained under enemy fire until darkness fell. During the night blocking fires and flare ships were employed extensively to interdict enemy escape routes.

At dawn on 10 November, Charlie Company, 2/12 Cavalry swept the enemy positions meeting no resistance. Enemy casualties were thirty-eight killed. Two 75mm recoilless rifles were destroyed and a third was captured along with an RPG-2 rocket launcher.

Throughout this period units received training as they rotated through periodic "stand-downs" and such activities as zeroing of individual weapons, classes on artillery forward observer procedures, ambushes and patrolling, and mines and booby traps. Also during these periods comprehensive briefings on the intelligence and operations situations were given by the battalion S2 and S3 to key unit personnel.

On the morning of 14 November tragedy struck as the battalion command

and control helicopter was shot down by enemy ground fire enroute to Alfa Company's location fifteen miles southwest of LZ Baldy. Everyone aboard the ship was killed in the crash, including the battalion commander, S3, liaison officer and artillery liaison officer. The battalion was placed under the operational control of the commanding officer 2/12th Cavalry.

On the 15th of November LTC William W. Taylor Jr., a combat veteran of two wars arrived to take charge and it was back to business as usual for the men of the Cacti Green.

THE ELUSIVE FOE

On 27 November the enemy graphically demonstrated his vaunted ability to find and slip through any opening left uncovered in an encirclement. The action that day had developed with Alfa Company running into stiff opposition from a well dug-in enemy force about seventeen kilometers southwest of LZ Baldy. Since CPT David R. Collins' Charlie Company had also combat assaulted into the same area, LTC Taylor instructed CPT Collins to try to flank the enemy position. Charlie Company completed this maneuver but was unable to sweep the enemy positions because of heavy automatic weapons fire. Just before darkness, Bravo Company 1/7th Cavalry, under operational control of the battalion commander, moved to occupy a blocking position on the enemy's other flank. As darkness fell it appeared the enemy was boxed in, with Alfa Company to the north and west, Charlie Company to the south, and Bravo Company 1/7th Cav on the east. However, Alfa Company had lost radio communication with a nine man element on their extreme left flank. During the night illumination was kept on the enemy positions, but blocking fires were not employed because of the unknown status of the missing Alfa Company men. Under the cover of darkness, the NVA troops slipped away through the unguarded sector where the cut off

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element was located. When the group was recovered the following morning, one of the men reported witnessing forty-one enemy troops slip out of their positions and disappear past him into the night.

On 2 December the battalion engaged in a joint operation with the navy in conducting a broad sweep of an area from approximately seven kilometers inland out to the coast. A Navy swift boat blocked the coast and forced back all small craft attempting to flee from the area so that identification checks of their occupants could be conducted by the infantrymen on the shore. The operation resulted in twenty enemy killed and documents and medical supplies uncovered with our losses being six men wounded.

NO SUPPER FOR CHARLIE TONIGHT

One of the year's more spectacular actions began as a routine mission for Bravo Company. On the morning of 9 December, CPT Reh and his company were lifted into an area about six kilometers northwest of LZ Baldy on a search and destroy mission. Almost immediately they spotted five enemy soldiers attempting to flee. Gunships were called in and killed the five. At the same time scout helicopters from the 1/9th Cavalry spotted a large enemy concentration attempting to escape the area along a stream bed to the northwest. Bravo Company was instructed to pursue the force up the stream bed. More gunships were called in and commenced strafing runs along the stream bed, killing large numbers of the fleeing enemy. Bravo Company kept the pressure on the enemy, occasionally receiving small arms fire from scattered pockets of resistance which were quickly neutralized.

At noon, CPT Chaplinski's Alfa Company was alerted for a combat assault in an area about three kilometers northwest of Bravo Company. Their mission was to establish a blocking force along the stream and then to sweep to the

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southeast along both sides of the stream to effect a link up with Bravo Company. Alfa landed at 1315 hours and proceeded according to plan, killing six enemy in their advance.

The two units made contact later in the afternoon. All the while the companies were advancing toward each other, gunships engaged the remaining enemy between them. When the action terminated seventy-six enemy had been killed by the gunships and sixteen more by the companies at a cost of one US soldier wounded. Ten enemy were also captured.

From interrogation of the prisoners it was learned that the gathering had been a rice distribution meeting with representatives from various NVA and VC units in attendance to pick up their ration. The initial assault of Bravo Company caught them completely by surprise. The relatively open terrain and the enemy's channelized escape route made them easy prey for the gunships and two rifle companies employed.

The remainder of 1967 saw a continuation of combat operations in the vicinity of LZ Baldy. The battalion enjoyed a brief respite during the Christmas truce as they prepared to begin a new year.

The men of the 1st Battalion, 35th Infantry can look back with pride on their record during 1967. The year saw the battalion displace over two hundred miles, fighting from the central highlands of Pleiku to the coastal plain from Phu Cat to Hoi An. The battalion successfully coped with all the problems peculiar to the Viet Nam fighting - monsoon rains, searing heat, and maintenance of a high state of combat readiness in units faced with a continuous integration of replacement personnel and perennial shortage of experienced leaders. In the final analysis, the performance of an infantry unit in Vietnam is judged by the number of enemy killed in relation to its own losses. In

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1967 men of the Cacti Green killed 1019 enemy while losing 113 of their own. Three hundred members of the battalion were recommended for awards for valor during the year, including sixty - one for the Silver Star, three for the Distinguished Service Cross, and one for the Congressional Medal of Honor. Their record speaks for itself.

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CHAPTER 3
MAJOR PROBLEMS

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